DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 403 540 CS 012 690

AUTHOR	Galda, Lee; And Others
TITLE	Literacy in Transition: Home and School Influences. Reading Research Report No. 62.
INSTITUTION	National Reading Research Center, Athens, GA.; National Reading Research Center, College Park, MD.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	96
CONTRACT	117A20007
NOTE	37p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Case Studies; *Classroom Environment; Classroom Techniques; *Emergent Literacy; *Family Influence; Peer Influence; Primary Education; Qualitative Research; *Reading Instruction; Social Influences; *Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS	*Literacy as a Social Process

ABSTRACT

A qualitative study described the practices that supported literacy development within one first-grade classroom community and focused on one child, beginning with his entry into first grade and ending near the end of his second-grade year. Practices such as the deliberate valuing of children's live at home, the connection between home and school via home literacy journals, and the establishment of a social, supportive literate community were key to the functioning of this classroom. Oral sharing time, writing and reading workshops, whole-class reading, and project centers were rich contexts that supported children as they developed their ability to communicate through and about print and cultivated the habit of literacy. "John," the case study child, flowered into literacy during his first-grade year with the support of his teacher and peers. While he continued to develop his literacy abilities in his second-grade year, the minimal social interaction in that classroom setting seemed to affect his literacy growth. (Contains 34 references and 6 figures of data.) (Author/RS)

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Literacy in Transition: Home and School Influences

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NRRC National Reading Research Center

READING RESEARCH REPORT NO. 62
Summer 1996

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The work reported herein is a National Reading Research Project of the University of Georgia and University of Maryland. It was supported under the Educational Research and Development Centers Program (PR/AWARD NO. 117A20007) as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The findings and opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of the National Reading Research Center, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, or the U.S. Department of Education.

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The National Reading Research Center (NRRC) is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education to conduct research on reading and reading instruction. The NRRC is operated by a consortium of the University of Georgia and the University of Maryland College Park in collaboration with researchers at several institutions nationwide.

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National Reading Research Center
Universities of Georgia and Maryland
Reading Research Report No. 62
Summer 1996

Literacy in Transition: Home and School Influences

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Abstract. *This report describes the practices that supported literacy development within one first-grade classroom community and then focuses on one child, beginning with his entry into first grade and ending near the end of his second-grade year. Practices such as the deliberate valuing of children's lives at home, the connection between home and school via home literacy journals, and the establishment of a social, supportive literate community were key to the functioning of this classroom. Oral sharing time, writing and reading workshops, whole-class reading, and project centers were rich contexts that supported children as they developed their ability to communicate through and about print and cultivated the habit of literacy. John, the case study child, flowered into literacy during his first-grade year with the support of his teacher and peers. While he continued to develop his literacy abilities in his second-grade year, the minimal social interaction in that classroom setting seemed to affect his literacy growth.*

> Children are scattered throughout the room with papers, pencils, books, and markers. Everyone is engaged in writing. There is a hum of talk as children ask, of those with whom they are sitting, how to spell words. Various children offer spellings and discuss which one is correct, the writer puts down what she considers the best, and then goes on. Children are murmuring to themselves, talking with Betty, the aide, and me (*Lee*). Suddenly Ami bursts into song. Other children pick up her song and continue their writing, singing. (Field Notes, 10/7/92)

In just 4 weeks, the children in Betty Shockley's first-grade class have settled into the habits of literacy in their classroom. When they arrived in her room in late August many of them were not reading or writing, and did not see themselves as readers and writers. Within 4 weeks, they were all so comfortable with themselves as literate people that they could write while singing. This report traces the refining of the development of literacy within the classroom community and then focuses on one child, beginning with his entry into first grade and ending near the culmination of his second-grade year. We consider evidence of his literacy ability as indicated by test scores, samples of his reading and writing as it

occurred naturally in the classrooms, and augmented by field notes describing literacy events across the two years.

What Does It Mean to Be Literate?

The question of what it means to be literate has occupied many scholars and researchers in the recent past. No longer content with the simplistic descriptions of literacy that were once prevalent, we now seek to incorporate new knowledge of the variety and flexibility inherent in literacy, and the engagement that pursuing literacy requires.

Here, we define literacy as the ability to communicate through and about print. As children learn and develop, this ability becomes more elaborated, enabling them to read and write with greater fluency and control across a variety of texts and situations. Along with this, the *habit* of literacy also develops. This is evidenced by the joyful pursuit of literate skill and literacy opportunities.

We take a developmental orientation to literacy; children at different levels of development define competence in different ways (Waters & Sroufe, 1980). We do not take an adult model of competence in literacy and break it down into its component parts so that it's digestible for children. Rather, we view literacy as qualitatively different for a kindergarten child than for a fourth grader, and possibly qualitatively different among individual children in the same classroom. The developmental task is to find the thread of continuity across different developmental periods. Many scholars (Bernstein, 1960; Olson, 1977; Snow, 1991) suggest that literacy for preschool and early primary school children involves not only learning to read and write but also using literate forms of oral language in different literacy events. Literate language is language which conveys meaning textually, primarily, with minimal reliance on contextual cues and/or shared knowledge. When these literate opportunities occur in a variety of contexts and with a variety of support from adults and peers (Vygotsky, 1978), literate language develops into more traditional school-based literacy: reading and writing.

Children Becoming Literate: A Question of How

The question of how children become literate is still hotly debated in the scholarly community. From book reading in the home to curriculum and instruction in the primary grades, the issue of what contributes to literacy development continues to be explored, although most recognize the importance of home influences on school in general and literacy in particular.

Home Influences on Literacy

The influence of the home environment on children's literacy has a long and interesting history. Generally, this research tradition has been typified by what Bronfenbrenner (1979) called the "social address" model which posits that global socialization processes in the home (such as social class) affect children's developmental status. This work began in earnest in the 1960s with the

publication of the sociologist Basil Bernstein's (1960) seminal work on language use and social class. In a series of provocative theoretical and empirical monographs, Bernstein and his colleagues suggested that "restricted" home characteristics of working-class families (i.e., less varied social experiences) were responsible for children's "restricted" language and school failure. Correspondingly, the elaborated and varied experiences of middle-class children in their families reliably predicted "elaborated" language and school success. Bernstein used a design features argument, often used by sociologists, linguists (Heath, 1983), and educational anthropologists (Cazden, 1970), to suggest that the patterns of language use in middle-class homes were similar to those used in schools. That is, rules governing language use and social behavior in schools were similar to the rules of middle-class families. Thus, middle-class children succeeded in schools, where working-class children did not, because of the similarities of their social experiences. Working-class children were initially painted as deficient in Bernstein's model.

This work stimulated a huge amount of research on the differences between working-class and middle-class language and socialization processes (e.g., Hess & Shipman, 1965; Tizard & Hughes, 1984; Wells, 1981) and the ways in which these processes related to school success. The upshot of this research was that school was described as a middle-class institution, and the language and values of schools were consistent with those of the middle class (Heath, 1983). The social and linguistic processes of working and middle class were recognized to be *different*, the former was not *deficient* in comparison with the latter. Indeed, the language and social behavior of each group merely reflected differences in the social contexts in which each was embedded (Cazden 1970). Thus, the notion that one group was inferior to another was replaced with the idea that the behavior of all groups was influenced by the contexts in which they were embedded. Consequently, if we wanted to understand the reasons for the systematic school failure of a certain segment of our society, we should begin looking into the family and school contexts in which children functioned.

The present research is informed by the notion that behavior is influenced, in a dialectical manner (Hinde, 1980), by both individual characteristics and characteristics of the surrounding environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, we view children as influencing the environments in which they live and work and the environments, in turn, influencing children. We believe that children do well in schools, generally, when there is congruence between them (and their histories) and the design features of particular schools and classrooms. This does not necessarily mean, however, that home life should be adapted to fit school life. In some cases, such as the first-grade classroom life we explore here, the classroom life is deliberately structured to value and use the home life, and home life accommodates to school: thus, the two contexts influence each other. The strength of this congruence and mutual valuing between home and school should relate, we think, to children's success in school literacy.

Literacy Development and Instruction

Effective school literacy events, we think, are dynamic and transactive, with the interchange between and among those present during these events helping to shape the meaning that is made (Dyson, 1991). What children are and know, the sociocultural nature of the classroom, and the specific nature of various literacy events all influence children's construction of literate knowledge (Dahl, 1993; Dahl & Freppon, 1995; Green & Meyer, 1991). Furthermore, literate knowledge, like other forms of knowledge, is most effectively constructed in a social context through which learners are supported by others (Vygotsky, 1978). However, the ways in which schools and classrooms interact with families as well as how literacy is defined varies considerably across classrooms.

To oversimplify a complex educational concern, there are essentially two popular approaches teachers use to support the literacy development of their students. Each stance defines its priorities through use of time and the participatory roles of the students. These two approaches can be expressed as opposites: one, generally called whole language, broadly recognizes learning as the result of an active process of knowledge construction in the company of others (Vygotsky, 1978), where students constantly negotiate language through both oral and printed presentations (Edelsky 1991; Goodman, 1986); while the other, often labelled skills-based, claims learning best occurs through particular practice, usually individual, of particular skills at particular intervals (Adams, 1990; Chall, 1967, Stahl, Osborn, & Lehr, 1990). Both whole language and skills-based approaches accept literature as central to practice, but whole language embraces choice of material and social support as crucial to becoming engaged with reading and writing, while skills-based approaches control and use literature and writing as a base for independent skills acquisition.

Do skills-based proponents ever encourage their students to read for pleasure? Certainly, and whole language advocates assist their students in acquiring the skills of reading and writing in natural ways. The difference is the emphasis. Whole language stresses the necessity for engaged choice to precede any meaningful, necessary instruction; skills-based programs emphasize learning skills before, rather than because of being engaged with literacy. Weaver (1990) expressed the difference this way: "This broader educational philosophy stems from the recognition that meaningful and enduring learning occurs most readily as the result of an active process of meaning-making, rather than a passive process of filling in blanks or repeating or recopying information presented by the teacher or the text" (p. 8).

A further difference in the two approaches to literacy in the classroom lies in the way in which home influences are viewed. A wholistic perspective not only recognizes and values but *needs* children's lives at home in partnership with their lives in the classroom. This perspective "promotes whole learning through students' whole lives" (Weaver, 1990, p. 6).

Tracing Literacy Development in Grades 1 and 2

This study was conducted across 2 years by a team of university- and classroom-based researchers. During Year 1, the team consisted of four: Lee Galda, Tony Pellegrini, and Steve Stahl from the NRRC, and Betty Shockley as both teacher-researcher and a member of the NRRC. The second year marked a shift in the research team, with Stahl not participating and Shockley moving full-time to the NRRC. The second-grade classroom teacher did not participate as a research partner.

We began the study with a general question: What practices support literacy development in this particular whole-language classroom? As we participated in the life of the classroom, we began to ask other, more specific questions, such as:

- How does the classroom teacher promote connections between home and school lives?
- How do the children make use of their home lives in the context of school?
- What is the role of oral language in the development of literacy?
- How does the classroom teacher promote a supportive, tightly-knit literate community?
- How do the children support one another in literacy development?

During the second year of the study, we continued to track the literacy development of six children, documenting the transition from first to second grade, and from a whole language classroom to a more skills-oriented classroom.

Methods

The design of this study was qualitative, a meta-case design that allowed a rich description of cases within cases. During Year 1, the larger case was the classroom, and within that individual children were followed across the year. The class moved, almost completely intact, to second grade and the six children whose parents gave permission for them to continue in the study were followed during their second-grade year; data from one of those six children are presented here. During the second year of data collection the children were the focal cases; the classroom was not studied as a unit, although it was observed as the context within which the focal children worked.

First Grade

Classroom observations began on the second day of the school year when the university-based researchers visited the classrooms. By the second week, one of two university-based researchers observed each week. Data for this study consist of biweekly observations by the first author only. These observations continued biweekly through March, with one observation in April and a final observation in May. School ended the first week in June. The class was observed for full days at

the beginning of the data collection, and then for the mornings, the time in which most of the literacy-related activities occurred. After a late lunch, the focus was on mathematics and free-choice center time, during which time oral language samples were audiotaped once a month. As an observer-participant, Lee took extensive field notes which were then transcribed and embedded with transcribed audio- and videotapes of literacy events.

The Home Literacy Journals were part of Betty's regular routine. Three times a week across the entire year, the children took a book and their journal home where they read and responded to the book, using the journal, with others or independently. Additional home information came from the literacy network measure developed for this project that was adapted from the work of Cochran (Cochran & Riley, 1988). The questionnaire, which was administered by Betty during a parent-teacher conference in the spring, asked caregivers to identify the activities involving books, paper, and pencils that the child engaged in and with whom they did each. Information in the form of a Home Inventory (Caldwell & Bradley, 1984) was gathered by Betty when she visited each of her students' homes during the spring quarter. [Psychometric information on these measures can be found in Pellegrini, Galda, Shockley, & Stahl (in press).]

Interviews were conducted in the fall, winter, and spring between Lee and Betty. These interviews, in which both daily literacy events and broad beliefs and practices were discussed, were audiotaped and later transcribed. Other, informal discussions during lunch or after school between Lee and Betty were noted in memos.

Individual student data for Year 1 also included a range of standardized literacy measures, informal literacy measures, audio- and videotapes of reading and writing events, classroom observations described in field notes, literacy artifacts, and home literacy journals.

At the beginning, middle, and end of first grade, we administered the Stahl and Murray (1994) test of phonological awareness, Clay's (1985) Concepts About Print, and Leslie and Caldwell's (1990) Qualitative Reading Inventory to measure reading status. For writing, we administered Clay's (1985) writing fluency measure, which asks children to write as many words as they can in 10 min; and a dictation measure, which asks children to write a sentence from dictation. Informal literacy measures included a task in which children were asked to "write a story about a dog and a cat," a timed writing sample also administered across the first-grade year. We recorded children reading aloud from the trade books they had selected for independent reading. The children were also interviewed at the end of the year about their perceptions of themselves and others as literate persons.

Second Grade

Data for Year 2 consisted of formal and informal literacy measures, classroom observations, literacy artifacts, Home Literacy Journals, and a single home visit by Betty in the spring. The case study children, along with the rest of their classmates, were tested at the

beginning and end of the year by the school reading specialist who used a standardized informal reading inventory. The children also read aloud a book of their choice and were again given the timed writing task at both the beginning and the end of the year. Oral language during center time was audiotaped once a month by a graduate assistant. Observations of the focal children in their classroom were made every 2 to 3 weeks by Lee through December, and then every 2 to 3 weeks by a graduate assistant through the end of April. Samples of students' writing were copied as were the Home Literacy Journals.

Data Analysis

For this report, field notes resulting from classroom observations were read and coded for significant themes and issues by both Betty, as the classroom teacher-researcher, and Lee, one of the participant observers. Following this, narrative descriptions of the first-grade classroom were written and discussed by Betty and Lee. Then narrative descriptions of the behavior of the focal children were generated. Data from the literacy measures and the home information were then added to the narrative descriptions for a picture of individual children's literacy development across first and second grade.

The Setting

Neighborhood School is a K–5 school in Athens, Georgia, a medium-sized city in northeastern Georgia with a population consisting primarily of African Americans and Caucasians of varying economic situations. Seventy-four percent of the students in the school were eligible for either free or reduced-fee lunch programs. The school is in a low- to middle-income, mixed race area. Some children walked or were driven to school; some rode the bus. The classrooms were roomy and class sizes small: a maximum of 22 children in the first-grade class and 25 in the second-grade class. There was a full-time aide in first grade and a part-time aide in second.

The Larger Case: First Grade

The school picture of Betty's classroom shows 17 children (10 African American, 1 Asian, 6 Caucasian), one teacher, and one teacher's aide; although there were as few as 16 and as many as 22 students in the room at various times during the year. Two large desks, one for the aide and one for Betty are close to the wall to the right of the door. They are piled with papers, a computer, newspapers, books, bookbags, coffee cups, signs, and so forth, all of the evidence of busy lives. They are also immediately out-of-view and forgotten once inside the door a few paces. Immediately to the front of the door is a listening center, and beyond that on the left-hand wall are shelves that hold leggos, puzzles, games, and materials. There are four tables with six chairs each arranged on this side of the classroom. The back wall has a door leading outside and huge windows above a low cupboard that holds guinea pigs and a parakeet who often sings. The far right-hand wall is lined with bookshelves and hundreds of children's books. There's a large rug, some big pillows, and

some stuffed animals nearby. A small stage area with boxes of books on the back is close to the front of the room, almost touching Betty's desk. There's an easel, a chart, a high stool, and a tape recorder and mike at the edge of the stage. There are children's pictures, writing, and other work everywhere—on bulletin boards and hanging from the ceiling. Several big books rest on the easel, a chart full of environmental sounds (like sirens) is tacked on the wall, and charts for jobs and sharing schedules hang from the cork strip above the chalkboard. There is plenty of space left for the children to sit on the floor in front of the stage.

Their teacher, Betty had been teaching kindergarten and first grade for 11 years when the study began and was considered a master teacher, having received the teacher-of-the-year award from her school and then school district, and being named the runner-up for teacher of the year in the state. She was, in both theory and practice, a whole language teacher who actively built a community of learners.

The Oxford American Dictionary defines community as (1) a body of people living in one place . . . and considered as a whole; (2) a group with common interests or origins; and (3) fellowship. A combination of all three meanings begins to describe Betty's class. They were indeed a community, people who lived and worked together inside and outside the walls of the classroom.

The community building in Betty's classroom was a deliberate, planned act. In a discussion between Betty and Lee at the end of September, Lee asked Betty about the importance of community.

L: Community is always an underpinning for you, I would assume.

B: Right. It's just like family and maintaining family and marriage. You always have to work at it.

L: Yeah.

B: You know, it's never just a given. And so we learn to talk respectfully to each other, and we know that some people can have bad days and we're all human, and we bring our outside life to this inside life, too, so that we can respect it and look at it and consider it. . . . The community building is just constant, but very aggressive in the beginning and consciously, I guess, . . . to make it very explicit that we are saying this because this is important to us because we live together and we need to know each other. . . . And with as much responsibility [in the classroom] as these children have, that community base has to be there. You can't say, "Okay, y'all just go." They've got to learn to share the books and make trade-offs and how to use their time. (Interview, 9/24)

The functioning of the community rested on the importance placed on oral sharing of the dailiness of children's lives, the students' freedom of choice and movement during independent reading, and the small group configuration and sea of talk (Britton, 1970) upon which reading and writing rested. At the beginning of the year, Betty made explicit, deliberate comments that promoted self-efficacy. She helped the children feel that they were valued members of this community, realize that they could and should listen to and use each other's ideas and expertise, and understand how they

could be responsible and thoughtful community members. As the year progressed, the connectedness of community members allowed them to work toward literacy in ways that each found useful and satisfying. What happened in this classroom was the kind of "connected teaching" that rests on

> the . . . view that each of us has a unique perspective that is in some sense irrefutably 'right' by virtue of its existence. But the connected class transforms these private truths into 'objects,' publicly available to the members of the class who, through 'stretching and sharing,' add to themselves as knowers by absorbing in their own fashion their classmates' ideas. (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p. 222–223)

This connectedness rested on a very firm structure, with children knowing exactly what was expected of them and what their choices were.

> *B*: [They need to know that] this time is for reading and this time is for writing and that means you have choices about what you write and what you read and what paper you use and where you sit and that kind of thing. But it doesn't mean you have the choice to go do leggos or something.
>
> (Interview, 9/24)

Both individual choice and responsibility and social connectedness occurred within a predictable framework each day. Oral sharing time, writing workshop, reading workshop, whole-class reading time, and project centers time provided opportunities for children to make literate choices and to practice literacy in the company of literate others.

Oral Sharing Time

Oral sharing time had a special name, derived from a student's ritual opening during the previous school year. "Y'All Know What?" became the call that beckoned students to an opportunity for literate talk that began each day. From the beginning children talked, listened, and borrowed ideas from each other as they brought their lives to school and shared them orally. They told stories, explained leggo constructions, planned their writing, and retold familiar stories across the course of the year. Field notes from September 1, during the second week of school, show the variety and excitement that permeated "Y'All Know What" and made it such a rich opportunity for literate talk.

> It is first thing in the morning and "Y'All Know What" time has just begun. Jason shows and talks about his penny that was squished on a railroad track; Ami shows the story she wrote the day before, holding the book up for the class to see and moving it around the circle. She comments: "I was gonna write 'the end' but I didn't find out the words." Kimberly sounds out "t h e e e n d" and Betty says, "I'll help you." Ami ends with, "But I didn't have time to write it." Jenna tells a story about the sea and Betty comments, "Oh, Jenna, you ought to write about that sometime." Jenay says she's going to have a party and puts a sign-up sheet on Betty's desk. Penjata tells an

> elaborate story full of "and thens" and punctuated by the refrain, "Where's my bookbag?" uttered in a very dramatic voice. Betty chimes in, "You know what? It's neat to write stories with characters talking like that, like you really talk." Rick then tells his story, with sound effects, about swimming in a neighbor's pool—a very exaggerated, funny story. Betty says, "Oh, what a tall tale that is!" She then turns to the group and asks, "Why do you like Rick's story?" Various children respond, "Because it was funny." Betty says, "Yes. And he used sound effects." Jenay comments, "And he said 'hey, man'." Betty notes, "Yes, he talked like people would. So that you can understand it. Rick took something that really happened to him, like he really went swimming, and put extra stuff in it and made it fun. I loved it. I loved everybody's stories. It was so fun to hear what you have to say. You're all so interesting.

Already, just one week after school has begun, the children have begun to display a personal style, relate oral language to their writing, and borrow ideas, language, and structures from each other. These things originated with the children, but Betty made them explicit, helping the children see what they already knew how to do.

As the children changed and the classroom community developed, "Y'All Know What" evolved over time from a forum for sharing home lives with school companions and for rehearsing potential ideas for writing to a time to retell familiar stories, demonstrating to all the skill of the storyteller and engaging the audience in a happy recreation of a familiar tale. As the children became comfortable with sharing oral stories from home, Betty introduced them to new possibilities during sharing time, just as she moved from asking everyone to share each day to having smaller numbers of children sharing on assigned days. Rick's introduction of the tall tale on September 1 provided an early introduction to the many possibilities for oral sharing that were present in Betty's room. After this day, children continued to recount things that happened at home and to describe how they wrote stories or built lego creations in the classroom, but they also began to make up stories, tall tales that often found their way into the writing workshop. As the children became increasingly familiar with the stories in the many tradebooks in Betty's classroom, they developed favorites, stories that they enjoyed retelling. Thus, another option for sharing time began. As the children retold familiar stories they made the language of the story their own, adopting the words, rhythms, and intonations of the written word as they sought to recreate familiar tales. These occasions were always highly interactive, with the whole class listening carefully and helping the teller remember sequence, phrasing, intonation, and tone. Jenna attempted to retell *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* after Betty read it to the whole class:

> Once upon a time, there was three goats. Three billy goat Gruffs, and they were brothers. They wanted to go in the meadow because they wanted to get fat. Then they were walking the hillside they saw a BIGGGG bridge (*indicates the bridge with a gesture*) and there was a troll, a little troll who lived under the bridge. . . .

> And when the first . . . the real small billy goat walked across the bridge . . . the troll came out and said. . . . Trit trot, trit, trot . . . and then the troll came out . . . and he said, "Who is [*Another student*: Who is that jumping on my bridge?] that trapping on my bridge?". . . And the little billy goat said, "Oh, it's only I, the little billy goat.". . . and then he said, "I will gobble you up." [*Another student echoes*: "I will gobble you up."]

Toward the end of the telling, the other students were enrapt in Jenna's recreation. Just as the big billy goat is telling the troll to "Come on out here and see what you can do," another student chimes in: "Come on *out* here and see what you could do. Hit him with a big horn!" Not only the storyteller was making the story language her own.

In whatever form it took, oral sharing time was an invaluable opportunity for students to use language to share their lives in school and out, and to explore ideas and experiences as readers and writers.

Writing Workshop

During writing workshop, the children worked individually and collaboratively on writing projects of their choice for 30–40 min. Never was the workshop quiet; rarely was the talk off task. Working at small tables promoted collaboration among the children whether Betty or her aide were there or not. The description of writing workshop at the beginning of this paper describes the feeling in the room: writing workshop was always filled with the hum of busy voices, if not song.

Many of the children composed aloud as they wrote, either saying the words that they intended to put on paper or spelling aloud. An audible vocalization when spelling meant immediate help from neighbors, even if not explicitly asked for. On September 30th, John is reading his story to Lee, who is seated at the table with him and four other children, when Jason offers unsolicited help:

John: (*Leaning over his paper*) One time/

Jason: (*Leaning over John's paper*) One starts with a O.

Lee: Jason says that one starts with an O.

Jason: 'Cause I remember from kindergarten.

Help with spelling came in a variety of forms, as Kimberly demonstrated on September 1st. When Shuntae asks the table at large, "How do you spell Ms. Shockley?" Kimberly jumps up and gets a book, returning with it open to the inside page, saying, "Here's how to spell Shockley. Just go get a book that her name is on and copy it. Her name is on all of the books in the classroom."

Collaborating during writing also involved talk to plan writing with a writing partner. Jenna and Brooke often worked together, with both planning the writing, Jenna doing the actual writing, and Brooke illustrating the piece. Sometimes, they would work on parallel books, with each writing on separate papers but making sure that they were writing the same thing. At other times, especially toward the end of the year, they would sit together, offering each other help with spelling, with

ideas, and being a "listening ear" when asked, but working on totally separate pieces.

There were many varied opportunities for talk during writing workshop, and the children had both informal opportunities to move around the room as well as structured opportunities to work with new people when they worked with different groups. Never told to write silently, they used talk to support their language learning as they took chances and grew as writers.

Time to share writing grew from a time for children to show each other what they had done that day to a time for children to show their work and invite helpful feedback from their classmates. As individual students read their writing, Betty and other students would comment on their drawings, the words they chose to use, the punctuation they used, and the general nature of their piece. Ranging from "Oh, I like that part" to "That's funny!", student comments indicated that they were attending to the author's voice and took their role of audience seriously, just as they did when they were at their tables during writing workshop.

Reading Workshop

Reading workshop, when children were free to select books, read, and respond as they chose, followed writing workshop for most of the school year and began as children finished writing or sharing their writing and moved toward the hundreds of books that were in their classroom. As children selected their books they moved to wherever they were comfortable reading. Some returned to the tables where they had been writing. Some sprawled on the rug near the bookshelves, others sat on the stage in the center front of the room or in front of the adult desks which were over in a corner. Some took books to the audiocenter and listened to them on tape. A few students would go out into the hall for a quiet spot. Jenay liked best to get into a carton that served as a "covered wagon" for the study of the "old days" during center time, that was near the reading corner, taking all of the stuffed animals with her, and read to them. Children read individually, in pairs, or in groups of three. Some worked with Betty and her aide, some read to whoever was observing that day.

The field notes from October 27 illustrate some of the variety of partnerships and configurations that were possible during reading workshop:

> Children move into reading time gradually. Ivy points as she reads. She's using picture cues for the nouns. Adrienne sits next to her, reading the pictures and telling the story from memory, running her fingers over the words. Ivy insists on helping. Pakaysanh is looking at a dinosaur pop-up book, *David Dreams of Dinosaurs*. John asks me to read *Berenstain Bears Trick or Treat*. A group of children are gathered around Betty, reading. Ami is still working on her drawing. Pakaysanh gets *The Magic School Bus*. Some children are in the hall reading and putting a play together. Jason reads from memory, looking at words only when he needs prompting. Marianesha and Adrienne are partner-reading *Rosie's Walk*. Dennis, Andrew, Desmond, Jenay, Ivy,

> Jenna, and Jason are now in the hall reenacting *Rosie's Walk* with cards. (Field Notes, 10/27)

As with writing time, there was a lot of helping talk. Children chatted quietly about the books they were selecting, often arranging to swap after they had finished with their first choices. Sometimes children would take the pile of books written by the author the class was studying and a small group would work their way through the pile. The students knew who was a good reader and who could help them when they ran into difficulties. It was common to hear children asking those around them for help decoding difficult words, sharing funny bits from the text, and doing partner reading, alternating pages or characters' dialogue.

Whole-Class Reading

Whole-class reading looked different each day, but there was always the opportunity for oral interaction around the texts being read. Sometimes Betty read a big book, inviting children to look closely at the words and the pictures. When this happened, the talk was concerned with sounds of letters, words, placement, linearity, illustration-text match, and information in the illustrations. At other times, Betty read from regular trade books and the talk revolved around the author and the story. Children would readily discuss the choices the author made in telling the story, other books that they remembered as they related to the story, and things that had occurred in their lives that related to the story. In this respect Betty's classroom looked like others where children listen and respond to trade books (Cochran-Smith, 1984).

Because Betty valued oral language experiences so much, the whole-class reading time frequently moved into dramatic reenactments. These dramatic reenactments gave children an opportunity to use talk to plan, to perform, and to respond. Furthermore, like the oral retelling of familiar stories, dramatic reenactments provided the opportunity for children to make book language their own.

On a day when Betty read *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* during whole-class reading, the children asked to do a play. The following dialogue is taken from a video/audiotape and field notes for March 2.

Betty: You all are asking me if maybe we could do a play of *Billy Goats Gruff*. Now to talk about that. Let's see. Well, let me ask, Dennis, how many characters do we need?

Students: Four.

Betty: Oh, boy! There are a lot of Dennises here. You all think fast. Four characters. Who might they be?

Students: Troll and three goats.

Betty: The troll and three goats.

Student: Somebody needs to be the bridge.

[*Students are all talking at once, when one takes a bench that is in the reading corner and begins to drag it into the center of the room.*]

Betty: Oh, that's a good bridge.

[*Students and Betty discuss who will play which parts, that there will be several groups of players, and that those not performing will be the audience.*]

Betty: Hey, that looks like a meadow. Now, see. Why don't you pretend that that rug is the grass and you can come from this side.

Jenay: Can I be the narrator?

This was just one of many times when these students played with the stories they were reading. Since music was so prevalent in this classroom they often turned their stories into "operas," singing, for example, Sendak's *Chicken Soup with Rice* and *Pierre*. Don and Audrey Wood's *The Napping House* and *King Bidgood's in the Bathtub* were also dramatized, providing real opportunities to use story language and structure. These dramatic reenactments did not take place only during or after reading. They also found their way into project centers at the end of the day.

Project Centers

Children were free to choose from a number of centers at the end of the day. What these centers were and how they worked was negotiated between Betty and her students, providing yet another opportunity to use oral language in a meaningful way. Many students chose to work on the writing that they had begun earlier in the day; others chose to read. Some did legos and puzzles or went to special centers that related to the science, social studies, or math curriculum. Many chose to do plays, reenacting stories that they had heard or read together. These performances sometimes took place in the hall, where a dramatic play center was set up and shared by the other primary grade classrooms in the wing. This center housed kitchen equipment, tables and chairs, and a big box of dress up clothes. Often, small groups of children would organize a play during centers time, playing to an audience of themselves usually, but sometimes performing for the rest of the class just before dismissal. Children would do reenactments in the classroom, also, working on the small stage in the center front of the room. Children also used this time to do dramatic readings of favorite stories with a peer or peers, perching on a high stool or standing on the stage. It was obvious that these readings, like the reenactments, were done primarily for the readers' pleasure, rather than audience reaction.

Beyond the Classroom

Betty also encouraged reading and writing at home with Home Literacy Journals. Students took home a book and their journal three times a week to read, talk, and respond with someone at home. Talk was encouraged, with Betty often reminding students that "Talk is the most important thing." Children were free to work with anyone at home—and there was great variety. The journals also gave Betty the opportunity to carry on literate discussions in writing with her students and their families. The home journal procedure is more fully described in *Parallel Practices* (Shockley, Michalove, & Allen, 1995).

Echoing Calkins' (1991, p. 7) description of writing, Betty believed that "Literacy is lifework, not deskwork." This meant that students in this class brought their lives to school through story, both oral and written, and spent much of their time in school and outside of school negotiating meaning through language. Children's literature also provided a significant and dependable bridge supporting literate connections between home and school (Shockley et al., 1995). Books as well as written and oral stories of home and school life passed through both school and home settings daily and purposefully.

The Teacher's Role

The community that Betty and her students built was rich with talk, thanks to Betty's planning and her belief in the importance of talk (Galda, Shockley-Bisplinghoff, Pellegrini, & Stahl, 1995). During an interview on January 14, Lee and Betty discussed the ways in which Betty deliberately built a classroom community that supported children's acquisition of literacy, considering the role that Betty played as a literate other in that classroom community.

Betty: Because of my personal connectedness [to reading and writing], I have become a more skillful leader of literate wisdom for my students. I've been there, I am there, I'll always be there. . . .

Lee: You know, I think when you and Barbara (*another teacher*) say things like you "just try to get out of the kids' way," you really mean it and it is true. You get out of the kids' way because you know that you have given them a variety of ways, ideas for the paths that they can take, for the ways that they can go, for the books that they can read, for the people they can read with, for the strategies they can use [for reading], for the strategies they can write with, for the ideas they can use. They all have lots of choices that they can make, but not choices that they thought up all by themselves. . . . So when you get out of their way you get out of their way to allow them to do things that either you have told them about or things that they have discovered with your help [and that of their friends and family]. It's not like you are sitting saying, "Okay kids, become literate." When I watch you, I think you do an amazing amount of teaching. You're always connecting things for kids, connecting books to books. Today Rick said "Kaboom" and you said, "No, Anansi isn't here, but that would be a good one." That's something literate people do. You did it, it was no big deal, no fuss. They all [make those connections] now because you have been doing that since day one.

Betty: It was wonderful to watch.

Lee: So you get out of their way, but you also behave like a literate person and demonstrate a lot of literate behaviors and often will make it explicit. . . . You get out of their way to let them pursue literacy in their own manner, but you give them tools, you give them strategies, you really do.

Betty did, indeed, get out of the children's way, but only after she was sure that they knew that there are ways to go, that she was

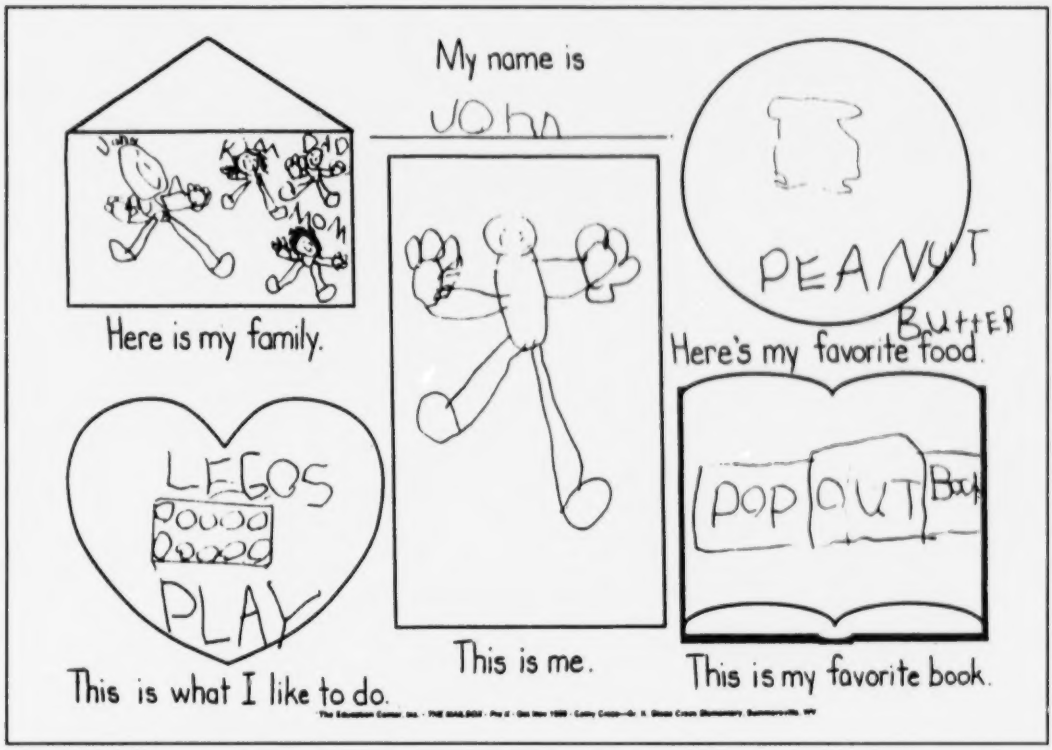

Figure 1. This is me. Beginning of First Grade.

"helping them to get on their way" (Interview, 1/24) to literacy.

On Their Way to Literacy: John's Journey

What happened in Betty's classroom was a communal experience as engaged in by individual members of that community. By looking closely at the literacy growth of one of these children, John, we can begin to understand how individual children made use of the opportunities that Betty and their family provided for them, and how that did or did not continue to sustain them during their second-grade year.

John's Story

On entry into first grade, John described himself in words and pictures (see Figure 1). He lived with both parents and his older sister; both parents were professionals. In answering a questionnaire about himself and his interests, he indicated that he liked to read Marc

Brown's *Arthur* books, owned 134 books, liked comics better than books, enjoyed the *National Geographic* and felt that *Ninja Turtles* was the best book he had ever read. He watched fewer than one movie a week, and only one television show per day.

John at home. John's home environment was so rich and varied that it met the criteria for 57 of the 59 descriptors on the HOME Inventory. Many varied stimulating experiences were available to John, including a trip to the Smithsonian, access to books, and sports and musical experiences. His parents provided a safe, pleasant, and stable life in which John was supported in his emotional, social, physical, cognitive, and linguistic development.

His mother wrote a description of John at the beginning of the year:

> John is a very sweet child, although at times he is slightly mischievous. He has a tremendous mechanical aptitude. Give him something to build and he can be enthralled for hours. When he is interested in something, he has practically endless concentration. If he's bored, he flits from activity to activity. John loves to be read to. He can recognize some words and is just about ready to read. He also seems to do well with numbers. He can do simple subtraction when it is explained in concrete terms. When he was three, he began riding a two-wheeled bike. He has good coordination. Just before he broke his arm, he had learned to do both the backstroke and breaststroke by watching swimmers on television. He just jumped in the pool and started doing the strokes! Ask him about our Fourth of July trip to Washington, D.C. He loved the city and the various monuments. John loves leggos. If you use leggos, I'm convinced he can learn anything. You'll find that he has a quick, funny wit. Sometimes it's a little too quick. Sometimes he's sleepy and grumpy in the mornings. Sometimes he becomes shy and embarrassed. I suppose all in all, he's a fairly well adjusted boy, ready to have fun and I hope ready to learn in first grade.

John at school. John was ready to learn in first grade, and quickly found friends and a working routine that was comfortable for him. The literacy measures given at the beginning of the year indicated that John had a basic understanding of how print works, and was just beginning to read decontextualized text. He knew that print rather than pictures carried the message in a text, was comfortable with directionality when reading, understood beginning and end, could recognize inversions, and understood the concept of letters, but did not indicate an understanding of basic punctuation or word or letter sequence within words. He wrote four words when asked to write as many words as he knew.

The informal reading inventory indicated frustration at reading the level-1 preprimer, *Bells*, when presented to him as a typescript lacking in illustrations, although John did select and look at trade books in the classroom and at home with obvious pleasure. He could distinguish some beginning and ending consonant sounds, as well as a few medial vowels.

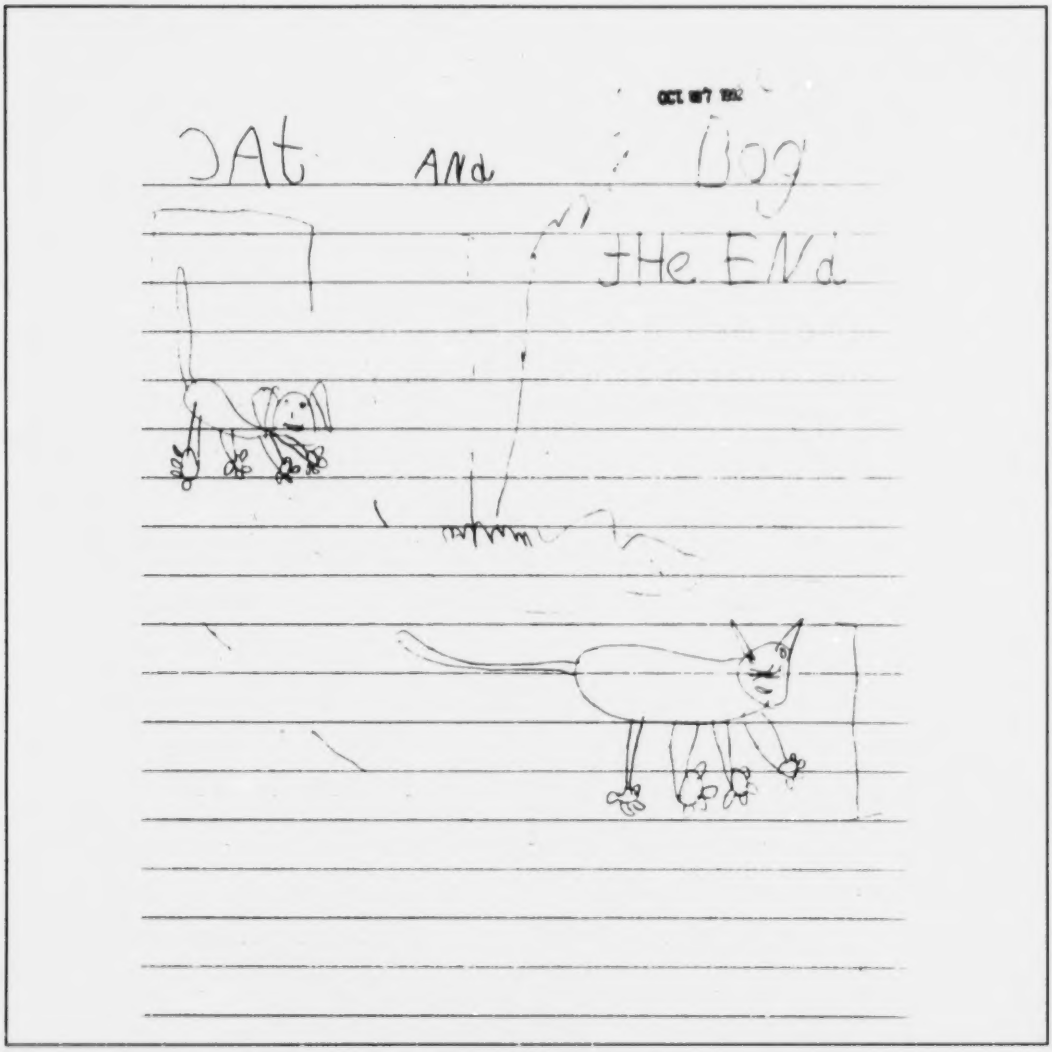

Figure 2. Cat and Dog Story. Early First Grade.

The first cat and dog story that John wrote in early October appears in Figure 2. Except for the title and the formula ending, he used only pictures to convey his story. By the end of January, when the second story was produced (see Figure 3), he was relying on words alone to covey his meaning. Many of his letters are backward, there is little attention to spacing,

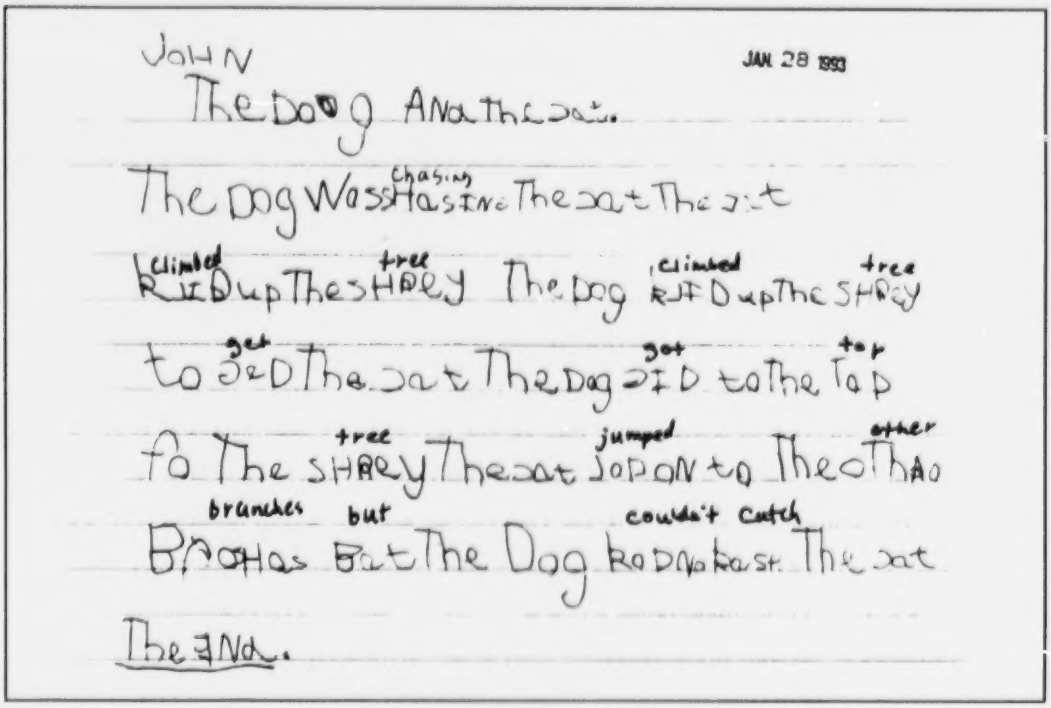
JOHN
JAN 28 1993
The Dog ANd the Cat.
The Dog Was Chasing The Cat The Cat
climbed RUP tree The SHREY The Dog climbed RUP tree The SHREY
to get The Cat The Dog got TO to top The Top
fo The tree SHREY The Cat jumped JOPON to other The oTHO
branches but couldn't Catch
BRoTHes But The Dog RODNo ka st. The Cat
The END.

Figure 3. Cat and Dog Story. Middle of First Grade.

and there is no consistent use of upper and lower case letters. His invented spelling was frequently unreadable by Betty, and sometimes even John could not decode what he had written. His 45-word story included a title, a problem, action, past tense, and both a happy and a formulaic ending, demonstrating his tacit knowledge of the story genre.

By the end of May, John was spelling more words conventionally and was reliably putting spaces between his words. His 73-word story, still with a title, a formulaic ending, and in the past tense, appears in Figure 4. This story contains an introduction ("One day"), a problem, actions, and a resolution. There are also character relationships, emotion, and time markers.

At the end of that first year, John wrote 40 words when asked to write all the words that he knew in 10 min. He was reading at a first-grade level fluently (as measured by the informal reading inventory), and could read the trade books, *The Gunnywolf* and "A Lost Button" from Lobel's *Frog and Toad* fluently. His end-of-the-year questionnaire indicated that John liked to read and write and considered himself a competent reader and writer. When asked, "Are you a writer?" John responded

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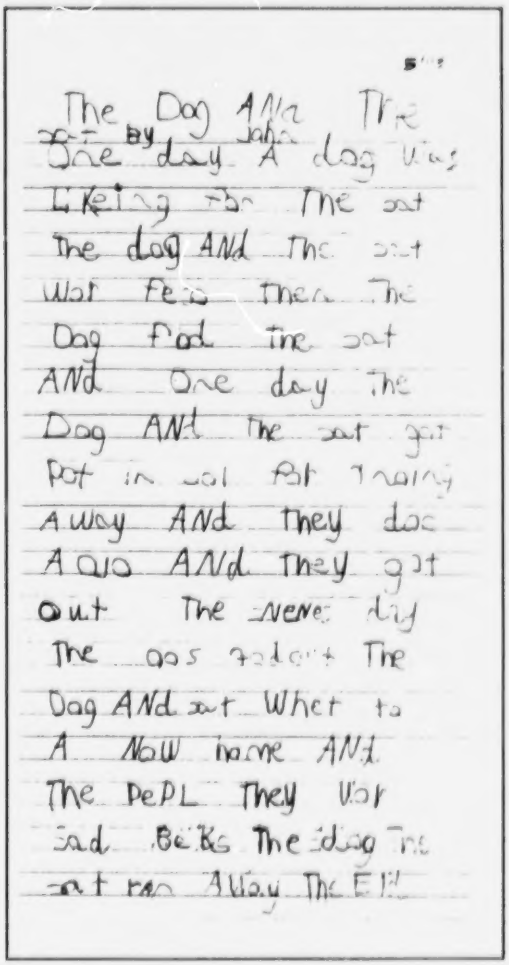

Figure 4. Cat and Dog Story. End of First Grade.

with a grin that lit up his face and a resounding "yes." His advice for helping someone learn to read was direct: "Look at the picture close and look at the first letter." For writing, he would say to do what his mother told him to do: "Write my abcd's and then try it."

In response to a parent questionnaire sent home by Betty at the end of the year, John's mother wrote the following:

> *Can your child read?* Yes, he can read simple books.
>
> *Does your child like to read?* Yes, he gets a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment from reading.
>
> *Does your child choose to read?* Yes, although he wants the reassurance of someone there to help "just in case."
>
> *How do you think your child learned to read?* John learned to read first by recognizing words. Lately, he has begun sounding out parts of unfamiliar words.
>
> *Does your child like to write?* He loves to write and invents wonderful stories.
>
> *Please tell me about your child now that he has finished first grade.* John has had a wonderful year. He has loved learning and feels that he can accomplish anything. It has been great seeing his self-confidence grow as he became more and more successful. Thank you for recognizing John's own special brand of giftedness. . . . I hope that [the principal] will keep the class together as they move to second grade in order to continue allowing the children to experience the very special kind of learning they have participated in this year. . . . I congratulate everyone who has been a part of John's learning this year, for a job well done. If we can keep him this excited year after

year, we will have a truly motivated learner! He's off to a great start!

John discovers how written language works. It is September 30, the sixth week of school, and the children have just come in from recess. They gather on the rug to sing "Hambone," and then move to the tables for writing workshop. John is sitting at a table with Dennis, Adrienne, Ami, and Jason. He is concentrating on the paper in front of him, adding letters to the words that he has scattered around the page.

Lee: Hi, John. What are you doing?

John: I'm trying to fill some letters.

Lee: Trying to fill some letters in?

John: Writing right there.

John reads his message to himself. The words are scattered around the page, and he is attempting to match his message to the words he has written. He erases BIK (bike) to write SNAK (snake) and tries again.

OWNT TIM RTN MY

MY RIN MY BIK MY

SEE BIK SNAK

He reads: One time, I was riding my bike and I saw a snake. He continues to work, stopping to ask:

John: How do you spell riding?

Lee: How do you spell riding? What does Ms. Shockley tell you to do when you need to know how to spell something?

Lee: Sound it out?

Betty: I usually say, "what's that first sound you hear? What's that last sound you hear?"

Lee: What's the first sound you hear in riding?

Betty: What's the next sound you hear, maybe?

John: I.

Lee: Rrriiiddd . . .

Jason: See, the word ride is in the word.

Lee: Okay, John. ri . . . ding.

John: Ri . . . T?

John continues to work on his story until it comes closer to what he wants it to say.

John: I can read this all by myself!

Lee: Well, read it to me, John. I'd love to hear it.

John: One time when I was riding my bike, I saw a snake.

Lee: One time when I was riding my bike, I saw a snake. And there's a picture of you riding your bike and seeing a snake! That's wonderful!

John: I need to write *A*. I need to write *I*, there. (*Does it*.) There. And another *I* here. (*Does*

so.) One time when I was riding my bike, I saw . . .

Lee: Can you read it to me now, John?

John: I have to write "my."

Lee: You have to write "my"? Now can you read it to me?

John: Where should I put "the" in here? I have to put "the" in here.

After some discussion with others, John asks Lee to read.

Lee: One time I ride . . .

John: I need "was."

Lee: What do you need there?

John: Was.

Lee: Was?

John: Right there.

Lee: So you're going to erase ride and put *was* there?

John: Mmmm, yeah. And erase "bike" and that (*points*) and. . . . And then I'll put "was" there and then that over here.

John continues restating his message and erasing words on his page until they are in the order in which he is saying them: OWN TIM WN I WS RITN MY BIK I SEE A SNAK. Quite satisfied with his success, he went to sharing time ready to read his story to his friends.

This episode illustrates the perseverance with which John approached literacy learning during this first-grade year. It also highlights the importance of time, choice, community, and good faith, or positive expectations, that supports the evolution of such breakthrough moments. John had time to work through this complex process of realigning written words with spoken language. He knew this time would be available to him every day; and day-upon-day, he added to his literate knowledge base, sometimes in big ways and sometimes by taking it one step at a time. Choice of topic and the consistent support of his friends also contributed to John's level of investment in coming to understand the writing process.

Undergirding these transactions, however, is the *good faith* John had in himself as a competent learner and the good faith of his family and teacher. John had observed print written and read in a linear left-to-right manner in many contexts. His parents read to him often at home. In school, his teacher had modeled such reading behaviors by pointing out the words while reading big books and little books to John individually and to the whole class. When John recognized the inconsistencies between what he wanted to say and what he had actually written, these prior experiences with print had a meaningful effect: He figured out how written language works. Until he puzzled out the conventions for himself, the examples in his world of print remained outside his level of application.

John was so persistent because he had the opportunity and support to be so. He worked quietly and diligently throughout the year in the company of his peers and both accepted

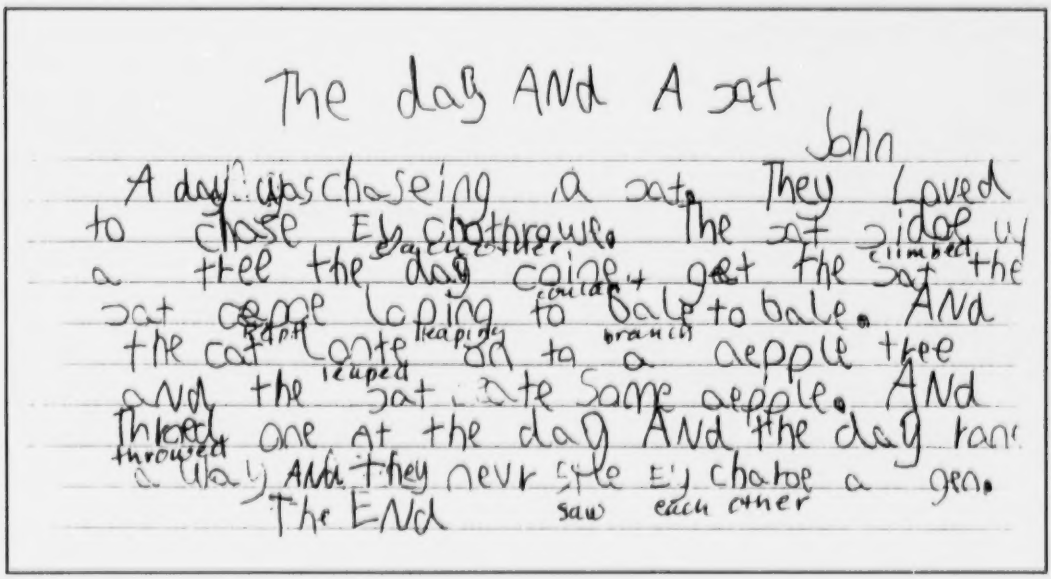
The dag ANd A cat
John
A dag was chaseing a cat. They Loved
to chase Ey chethrowe. The cat cideo up
a tree the dag coine get the cat the
cat cepae loping to bale to bale. ANd
the cat lonte on to a aepple tree
and the cat aeate some aepple. ANd
throed one At the dag ANd the dag rane
a way ANd they nevr slle Ey charoe a gen.
The ENd

Figure 5. Cat and Dog Story. Beginning of Second Grade. It reads as follows:

A dog was chaseing a cat. They loved to chase ey chethrowe (*each other*). The cat cideo (*climbed*) up a tree the dog coine (*couldn't*) get the cat the cat cepae (*kept*) loping (*leaping*) to bale to bale (*branch to branch*). ANd the cat lonte (*leaped*) on to a aepple tree and the cat aeate some aepple. ANd throed one At the dag ANd the dag rane a way ANd they nevr slle (*saw*) ey charoe (*each other*) a gen. The ENd.

and gave help graciously, a full participant in classroom life in the first grade.

John as a second grader. John's home life remained stable as he moved into the second grade and made the transition to a new classroom life. Many of his classmates moved with him, so he was in the company of peers with whom he was comfortable reading and writing. His second-grade teacher, Ms. X, continued the practice of Home Literacy Journals at the beginning of the year, although only one, as opposed to three, times a week. Likewise, reading and writing workshops were in place in second grade; but the time spent in reading and writing decreased while the time spent in whole-class instruction (such as whole-class reading and mini-lessons in writing) increased. This classroom was a skills-oriented classroom with certain practices, like reading and writing workshop, incorporated and adapted from whole language approaches. However, the context surrounding these workshops was fundamentally different from the first-grade context where a whole language philosophy

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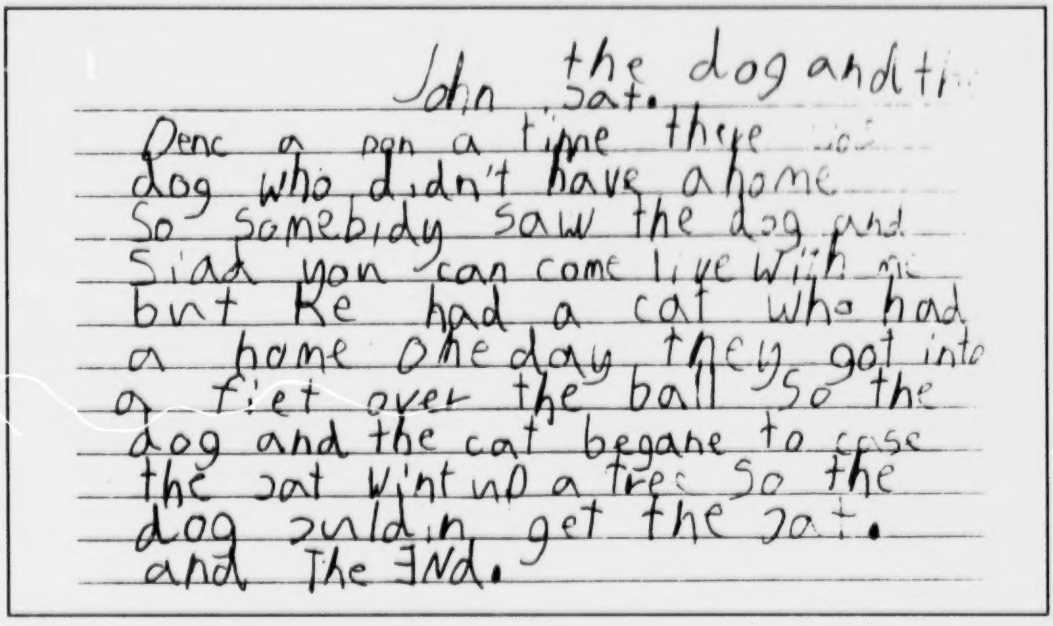
John the dog and ti
sat.
Once a pon a time there
dog who didn't have a home
So somebidy saw the dog and
siad yon can come live with me
bnt He had a cat who had
a home one day they got into
a fiet over the ball So the
dog and the cat begane to case
the sat Wint up a tree So the
dog culdin get the sat.
and The END.

Figure 6. Cat and Dog Story. End of Second Grade.

clearly guided practice. Although the children could and did talk to each other during writing workshop, there was little collaboration other than help with spelling, and there was very little talk during reading workshop. The children worked primarily separately rather than jointly.

Beginning in the middle of his first-grade year and continuing throughout this year, John was out of the classroom each morning during independent reading time when he participated in the gifted program.

John began the year about where he ended his first-grade year. His informal reading inventory indicated a first-grade instructional level and he read "A Lost Button" from *Frog and Toad* fluently as well; his comprehension was excellent in both cases. By the end of second grade, John was reading at a second-grade instructional level, but the comment on the informal reading inventory echoed the comment from the fall: John read slowly, hesitantly, and with a notable lack of confidence. He did, however, read the trade book, Stevens' *The Tortoise and the Hare*, fluently and with expression.

Although John wrote less often than he had done in first grade, his writing ability did continue to develop. The first "cat and dog" story that he wrote in second grade was composed on October 22, and appears in Figure 5.

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This 68-word story begins in the middle of the action with the chase, focuses on the action in the apple tree as the cat attempts to keep away from the dog, and ends with a resolution of the problem and a conclusion, as well as a formulaic ending. His writing is an interesting mixture of conventional and invented spelling, with some of the invented spellings very difficult to decode. He is consistent in selecting an appropriate initial consonant sound, used vowels as placeholders, uses long vowel sounds appropriately, and hears syllables within longer words. At the end of second grade, John wrote the story that appears in Figure 6. The 69-word story contains a beginning, a problem, action, and an abrupt, formulaic ending. His spelling is generally conventional and entirely readable. He uses only two periods in the whole story, not counting the one at the end of his title.

In John's writing workshop folder, there are several pieces, each one limited to a page or less and usually done in one sitting. There was no extended writing across time, no book production, and, seemingly, little emotional investment. A good student, John did his work quietly and well. This time, when asked at the end of the year, "Are you a writer?" he did not smile, but he still said yes.

John as a learner. It seems to us that after 2 years of learning with and about John, we need to acknowledge again the insights his parents offered in the very beginning of our study. For instance, they knew that John's strengths included "a tremendous mechanical aptitude. Give him something to build and he can be enthralled for hours." We wonder if supporting John's process of "building" his concepts of written language one word at a time as in our writing workshop example could be a reason for his high level of perseverance? As a cautionary note, his parents want us to also know that "sometimes [he] becomes shy and embarrassed." Should we keep this information in mind when we characterize John's oral reading in an evaluative context as "slow" and "hesitant" with "a notable lack of confidence?" Does he read more fluently when in a more comfortable setting such as with his family or peers? Yes, he does. And, could the information that "he learned to do the backstroke and breaststroke by watching swimmers on television" speak to us of the importance of students having many opportunities to be aware of the literate next steps of their peers? How wonderful when we remember the times our students seemingly did as John did, ". . . just jump in the pool and start doing the strokes!"

Could not John's family be describing many children and not just their son when they write, "When he is interested in something, he has practically endless concentration. If he's bored, he flits from activity to activity"? And, if such conditions of engagement, that is learning by doing, attention to areas of interest, time to immerse oneself in particular areas of study, and a sense of shared community are claimed by teachers, parents, and students, could we prepare for some very joyful noise?

Untold Stories

There were, of course, other children in the classroom with John, and these children

have their own particular stories, in spite of the similarities they share with John. Rick, fluent and precocious in his oral storytelling, learned to read and write and work with others during his first-grade year only to have a difficult second-grade experience that culminated in special placement. And there was Desmond, quiet, African-American, and male, with a tough exterior that did not quite mask the sweet boy inside, who was supported and encouraged at home and in school as a first grader, and who learned to read, write, and accept and give help. He became increasingly withdrawn and angry during his second-grade year, choosing not to read and write even during class time.

But there was also Jenna, a bright and friendly child, who flowered in the atmosphere of her first-grade classroom despite the recent death of her mother, and continued to grow and learn throughout second grade, moving into reading chapter books like the *Little House* series and producing stories and expository pieces of increasing complexity. Adrienne, a shy African-American girl also continued to quietly work at becoming literate, progressing from a child who was not comfortable nor fluent in reading and writing, to a competent user of written language by the end of her first-grade year.

Each of these children and their classmates made what they could of their school and home experiences. For some, the congruence between home and school, the opportunities at home and at school, and their particular strengths and needs provided the context they needed as they developed as literate people. Others got lost along the way.

Conclusion

What practices supported literacy development in this particular whole-language classroom? The deliberate valuing of children's lives at home, the connection between home and school via a literacy task, and the establishment of a social, supportive, literate community were key to the functioning of Betty's classroom. Oral sharing time, writing and reading workshops, whole-class reading, and project centers were rich contexts that supported the children as they developed their ability to communicate through and about print and cultivated the habit of literacy. Each of these contexts contained talk—talk about language, talk about the children's lives—that enriched and, indeed, enabled the children's learning. Collectively and individually, these children learned literacy through exploratory and explanatory talk with their peers as well as instruction from their teacher.

While some of the structures of classroom life, such as journals, reading workshop, and writing workshop, were present in both the first- and the second-grade classrooms, the oral interaction surrounding literacy events and the explicit valuing of home experiences decreased substantially in second grade. Without oral interaction, reading and writing became individual when Rick and Desmond still needed the collaborative support of their peers. Jenna, Adrienne, and John did continue to progress in their literacy development, but without the rich resource of their peers.

Perhaps the most important factor in the complexity of the literacy experiences reported here was the teacher. Betty believed in the

worth of each child and in the worth of oral collaboration. She was gifted enough to put these beliefs into practice in ways that created multiple opportunities for children to support each other as they learned to read and write. And they did.

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